

Winter Newsletter 2025

First newsletter of 2025! As we step into a new year its a good time to start thinking of the year ahead. Although April may be several months off yet it will be upon us before we know it! Its a good time to start thinking – what next? What do you want to do this year? Do you want to focus on skill development? Perhaps branch out to some sea paddling or trial canoeing? TCA has a variety of volunteer coaches who are happy to offer different experiences but we need to hear from you!



Being a smaller club some trips do have varying requirements: some are peer trips – you will need to have your own kit and boat for these and always check with the person proposing the trip to see if your skill set is suitable. Club run trips are advertised via email and often (but not always!) put on social media. Again it is important to check with the trip leader to ensure your skills are suitable. Club equipment can be borrowed for these trips for a small fee (honesty box in the shed or electronic payment to the club). TCA does not have a club trailer so club trips starting away from the sheds do require some car sharing and shuttling of equipment.



The Tamar River

So this week I started wondering how the Tamar got its name and if you believe in Cornish folklore then it is a tale of love, giants and nymphs! Legend has it a Nymph named Tamara had 2 giants (Taw and Tavy) who were in competition for her affections. The story goes Tamara's dad wasn't so pleased with these shenanigans and cast a spell turning her into a spring – the source of the river Tamar. Sad that their potential girlfriend had disappeared both Taw and Tavy got themselves

magically changed into rivers too. Happily Tavy met up with Tamara but poor old Taw got lost and headed off the wrong way never to meet again.

It is also considered that the name Tamar came from an ancient Celtic tribe called the Tammars.

Fun facts (possibly not fully confirmed facts!):

- The River Tamar source point is at Wooley Moor in North Cornwall. It is now identified by a stone and granite marker.
- Length – 61 miles from its source to where it finishes at the Plymouth Sound.
- Number of crossings = over 20 – the oldest being at Horsebridge when it was built in 1437.
- The earliest written record of the river was from 938 where King Athelstan was recorded as being killed near the River Tamar.
- The river is also mentioned in the Domesday book.
- Legend has it the devil is afraid to cross the Tamar into Cornwall being fearful of being turned into Cornish pasty filling!



Things to do in Winter

Winter paddling is not for everyone so if you yearn for the warmer months then why not expand your knowledge whilst waiting for things to warm up? As mentioned in the Autumn newsletter Paddle UK has multiple courses available to both members and non-members. (Some are free!) Courses include standard health and safety training right through to nutrition, health and the paddling environment such as tides. There really is a bit of choice for everyone.



AS Watersports – Winter warmers

AS watersports – a watersports store likely familiar to many in Exeter run a series of FREE talks over winter aimed at the paddling community. Check out the link below for the remaining talks this season.

<https://aswatersports.co.uk/blogs/events/winter-warmers>



What to wear in Winter – drysuit vs wetsuit

Generally most people fall into 2 camps for their chosen winter paddling attire: those who choose wetsuits and those who choose dry suits. But what's the difference?

Wetsuits:

- Made from neoprene
- Work by trapping a layer of water between suit and skin for thermal insulation
- Snug fitting
- Come in a variety of thicknesses generally from 2-7mm – the thicker the suit the better the insulation
- Can come in various styles including sleeveless, shortie style and separates such as neoprene shorts and leggings
- Generally give a good degree of movement – although the thicker the neoprene the bulkier the suit.
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Drysuits:

- Made from different material including Trilominate and vulcanized rubber.
- These work by using waterproof seals at the neck, wrists and ankles keeping the wearer dry and trapping a layer of air for insulation
- Can also wear a thermal suit or other layers inside the suit for additional warmth
- Generally bulkier and can give less freedom of movement than a wetsuit.
- Can come in various styles including bottoms/tops but a full drysuit is one piece

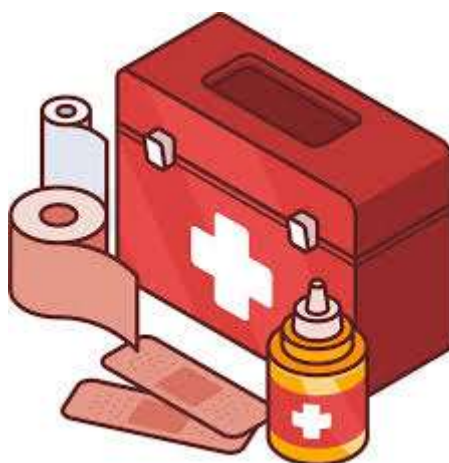
Both options give the winter paddler good choice and really it boils down to personal preference. Drysuits are more costly and require care to check seals and the drysuit carefully for any tears. Wetsuits require cleaning and checks for any rips or signs of disrepair.



Additional kit

Alongside the basics of your paddling kit what other extra kit may be helpful? Now this really is quite an open ended question and depends very much on your choice of paddling and can honestly prove a never ending list! However its a short newsletter so here are a few simple ideas:

1. Whistle – cheap, cheerful and easy to stash in your buoyancy aid! A whistle is a really cheap and easy-to-source bit of kit but if needed is worth its weight in gold. Can be used to signal for help to catch attention and is much easier to hear than a shouting voice. For water we would recommend plastic with no metal that can rust.
2. First aid kit – doesn't need to be all singing all dancing. A simple small first aid kit can be very helpful in a medical situation. Bonus if you can add in a personal resuscitation shield.
3. Dry bags – come in such a wide variety in every colour size and style you can think of! Very handy for keeping dry things dry or bagging up wet kit to keep everything else dry! Tend to be similar in how they all work but explore your options.
4. Personal light – safety first! A personal light fixed on your BA is important for identification in fading light. You can get specialist water sport lights or use bicycle lights, the author has also used her phone light and a small handheld torch before.
5. Waterproof phone case – helpful for snapping those pics for social media but a water proof case keeps your phone safe and ready to use – obviously most important when needed in an emergency. Some cases are also capable of floating.
6. Helmet – we encourage our paddlers to wear helmets during the introductory course and it is a compulsory measure for our young paddlers. You have one head – we do look to protect it. After that though it does become personal choice. Again there are a wide range of helmets available depending on what you use them for – some with caps, some with ear protection or visors. If you are looking to advance in your white water paddling or coastal rock hopping then I would urge you to look into a helmet that suits your needs. Helmets can always be borrowed from the club whether that be on a training night or club trip.



Finally, please check out the recent photos on Facebook of some of the winter paddles – especially the hardy group completing the White Water Safety course in what looks like some very chilly waters! Photo thanks to ‘James King’ and ‘Keelie Summerfield’ for getting some great pictures and videos!